

# **Building Rural Communities Act**

Rep. Steve Southerland, II (FL-02)

## **THE CHALLENGE:**

- One of the greatest challenges facing rural America is a lack of access to basic infrastructure, public safety, and other essential community facilities needs.
- As rural communities look to improve police and fire stations, community health clinics, senior centers, courthouses, and other facilities, they often do not have the resources or training to properly and efficiently plan and maintain large-scale construction projects.
- As a result, rural communities are often at a disadvantage, forced to spend more with less ability to navigate the process of securing a federally-backed loan and building a new facility.

## **THE SOLUTION:**

- U.S. Rep. Steve Southerland is introducing the ***Building Rural Communities Act*** to ensure rural communities can plan and construct community projects in a smarter, more efficient manner.
- Southerland's bill will set aside 3-5% of funding in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Development Essential Community Facilities (CF) loan and grant program for technical assistance, emergency management, employee training, health improvements, or financial advice in securing/repaying a loan.
- Because the funds have already been allocated under the USDA's CF program, Southerland's improvements come at **no additional cost to taxpayers**.
- Southerland's lead Democratic co-sponsor is Rep. Mike McIntyre (D-NC).

## **LOCAL SUCCESS STORIES:**

- Southerland's legislation is modeled after the USDA's successful Water and Waste Disposal program, which has a proven track record as one of the most effective rural development programs at the federal level.
- **Marianna** – Utilized the Community Facilities program to secure two fire trucks and has utilized technical assistance under the program for street and drainage improvements.
- **Blountstown** – Utilized program assistance for a wastewater plant inspection, vulnerability assessments, and development of an emergency response plan.
- **Rosedale** – The Rosedale Water Association in Gadsden County received help in resolving structural deficiencies and training board members in preparing budgets.
- **Taylor County** – The Taylor County Water and Sewer District received assistance in obtaining funding for a new water tower and other water and wastewater improvements.

## **ENDORSEMENTS:**

- Florida Association of Counties
- Florida Rural Water Association
- National Association of Counties
- Rural Community Assistance Partnership
- Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project